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THE
BIRTH OF FREEDOM
AND THE
PRESENT AGE



BY
W. H. TANNER

DAYTON, OHIO

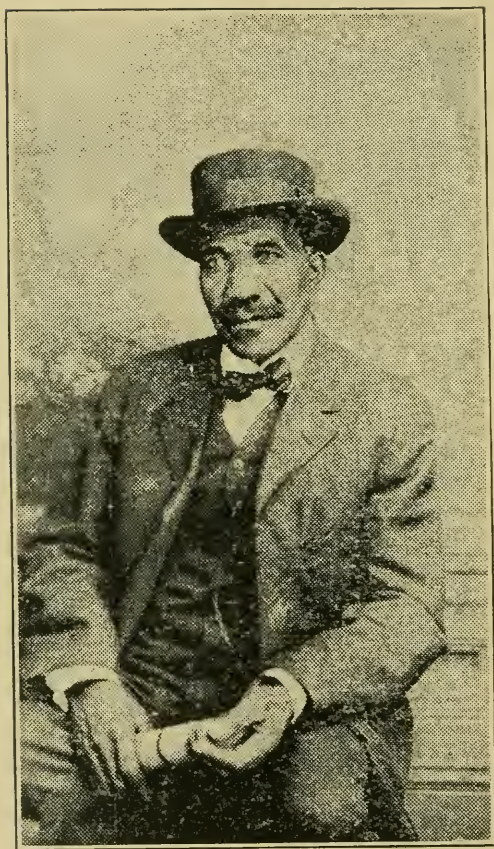
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Dayton, Ohio



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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Robert Caldwell

Mrs. Robert Caldwell (His Wife)

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson (Old Friend)

Frederick Douglas Odey

Mrs. Frederick Douglas Odey

Booker T. Poindexter

James Poindexter

Roscoe Simmons Caldwell

Miss Hallie Q. Odey

Miss Mary Odey

Miss Minnie Poindexter (School Girl)

College Boys and Girls:

Virginia Odey

Hattie Odey

Paul Lawrence Odey

Ethel Caldwell

Ray Caldwell

Elizabeth Caldwell

Dorothea Poindexter

Helen Poindexter

Robert Davis (Old Master)

Mr. Lawrence (White Friend)

Mrs. Lawrence (White Friend)

ACT ONE

(A log cabin. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Caldwell seated on boxes.)

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: We has been a long time anxious to get our freedom—de precious incouragement in de discipline of life—and it comes in time of our weakness and in time of our need. We am free tonight from de cruel slavery days, an' it lays right on our own minds to do wid our might what dy hands findeth to do which may do something for de comfort to see better days. And God grant us de blessings to be ready to answer de call—let it be noon or night. (*Rises with broom in hand with about three straws in it, and picks up some rags and throws them over in the corner.*) And this is the first night of our freedom. I wish some of dem girls and boys would come around. I will just clean up a little—just a few pick-ups.

Mr. Robert Caldwell: I wonder whar all de folks am to-night; things am looking mighty blue around here. I saw Old Master standing on de back porch just before dark looking over his glasses—looking mighty melancholy since Abraham Lincoln done wrote out dem proclamation papers dat freed us slaves. (*A rap on the door.*)

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: Who am dat?

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: It's Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson, de banjo boy.

Mrs. Robt. Caldwell: You come in right now, Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: Say, I am all mixed up tonight; as I was coming here, I met some white folks and dey said, "There goes one of dem free niggers now." What does dey mean by saying I am free? Old Massie orders me around just de same as he always do, if not

more.

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: Your old Massie nor my old Massie nor misses nor none of de masses and misses have no right to order us around unless dey pay for it, since Abraham Lincoln done wrote them a great big long letter telling dem to take off de shackles of all of us slaves. And you mark my word dat dey will be a great big change in our race, I am telling you. (*A rap is heard.*)

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: Come in.

(*Enter with their clothes in bundles, Mr. Frederick Douglass Odey, Booker T. Poindexter, Roscoe Simmons Caldwell, James Poindexter, Miss Hallie Q. Odey, Miss Mary Odey, in a happy mood.*)

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: We are free tonight!

Booker T. Poindexter: And dat is what is de madder wid Massie tonight.

Miss Mary Odey: Is dat what de madder wid the white folks tonight?

(*Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence, white friends, enter.*)

Mrs. Lawrence: You all must understand that you are free to go wherever you like; and if any of our people try to make you work for them as they have herebefore, you just tell them that you are free and have changed your mind.

Mr. Lawrence: This slave business has kept this country excited, and now the law has blotted it out and in our best circles it was pronounced unconstitutional long, long ago; and my belief is that Abraham Lincoln has settled it forever.

Mrs. Lawrence: And God granted your race submissive temper to bear whatever was put upon you with a full conviction that some day would tend your highest good, and he will guide and comfort you. Some day your race will cheerfully look forward to what lies before them.

Mr. Lawrence: "And now, good-by, and you all must know that you are free to go wherever you like; and if any of our people come around to make you work for them, you just tell them that you are free and have changed your mind. (Go out.)

Robert Davis (Old Master comes in angry and in a high state of excitement): Robert, you go over and feed the horses, mules, cows, sheep, hogs and dogs, chickens, and hitch the mules up to the sled and haul in enough corn and fodder to last over Sunday.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: I am free and has changed my mind, and some of your people has just left here and they told us if you come around here to make us work as we has herebefore, to tell you that we has changed our minds and dat we am free.

Robert Davis: Robert Caldwell, you go over and black my boots!

Robert Caldwell: I am free and have changed my mind. I stood shoulder to shoulder in de battle of Fort Sumpter and I heard de roar of de hustling cannons. I saw de mixed smoke and flames in de old plantation. I saw de ground strewed wid the dead and de dying who rallied behind Lincoln because dey wanted to help break down de great directing force of slavery that was destroying our very life, or freedom, our homes, our firesides, our all. (Spellbound.)

Robert Davis: Mary Odey, you go over and get my breakfast!

Mary Odey: I am free tonight and has changed my mind, and my resolutions is strengthened by de reflection dat supplies de foretaste for a better day to come, when our little children can have der faces clean, and der clothes mended and to learn to read and write and to explain der lessons and der sense to follow; to pour out dat of liberty for all dat live to answer life's great end and every bit of

us is human—make us fellow to your race.

Robert Davis: You are going to remain right here and we will pay you for what you do. (*Goes out.*)

Roscoe Simmons Caldwell: We is free tonight and we must commence looking around like white folks. We must have farmers, lawyers, statesmen, doctors, preachers, school-teachers, dress-makers, hair-dressers. De talent is in our race, and all we have got to do is to commence digging to get it out. (*Ask each one to choose what they want to be.*)

Miss Mary Odey: What does you want to be, Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson?

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: I am not looking to be anything. I am just here wid the rest of the folks.

Mr. James Poindexter: You see how hard it will be for us who strive to grasp dat which can at best give but a slight reward, and many times it will extend to de full extent of our hopes.

Miss Hallie Q. Odey: I see nothing but to educate ourselves and circulate de Bible and Good Book among us to encourage us to do de very best for ourselves. For virtue and intelligence am de foundation of dis country and it is de duty for our race to help to keep it pure.

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: Yas, and de Christian banner has many local influences and teachings; but within the broad folds we trust will cover a many true follower; so we must educate de race or we will perish by der ownselfes, so y'll just as well get your rags ready right now and go to work and stury dem books so you and your children's children can add new honors to de race.

(*Shakes hands and bids their hostess a warm farewell with their clothes in bundles and all leave in a happy mood.*)

Mr. Frederick Douglas Odey, Roscoe Simmons Caldwell, James Pointdexter, Miss Hallie Q. Odey, Miss Mary Odey.)

Mrs. Robert Caldwell (standing in the door): Let each of

de rising of de sun find in your condemnation some good deed and declosing of de evening wid de assurance it has been performed.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: Each closing of de evening you will feel de pangs of hunger.

Booker T. Poindexter: But today de most fear am dat ignorance will bring everything down to its own level instead of de true knowledge which shall level up de low places. I am going to work for myself in de daytime and go to night school and make something out of myself; so good-by, and may de blessings of de Almighty rest on you all and yours. (*Goes out.*)

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: Good-by. Avoid rum and tobacco in all form and late hours unless dey am prescribed by a doctor for de medicine. If dat old man can learn to be a preacher or a statesman, I can learn to live without working. The very idea of dat old man working all day long and going to night school at night! I have been knowing him for twenty years and he was gray and bald den, and de man I met with him when I first met him said he had been knowing him for twenty years before I met him—said he was gray and bald den, and he must have been twenty years old before he was gray and bald; so you see dar's sixty years in sight now, and I haven't said a word to his master about his age.

Robert Caldwell: You may be measuring dat man in de smallest space. Some day, he may come back and make a speech for de race on de celebration of Abraham Lincoln's proclamation.

(CURTAIN)

SECOND ACT

THE FAMILY REUNION

(A large living room furnished. Pictures on the wall. An air of comfort. Seated in the room, Robert Caldwell, Mrs. Robert Caldwell, Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson, Frederick Douglas Odey, Mrs. Frederick Douglas Odey, Booker T. Poindexter, Roscoe Simmons Galdwell, James Poindexter, Miss Hallie Q. Odey, Miss Mary Odey, Miss Minnie Poindexter, waiting for the arrival of their boys and girls from college.)

Mrs. Frederick Douglas Odey: This family reunion is full of interest, and nothing seems wanting to impress upon the mind and heart. This group of happy friends will be a sunny spot in our remembrance.

Booker T. Poindexter: We will try to make this event pass as pleasantly as we can, but there is always something left to desire, and the last thing we long for tonight seems the most necessary to our happiness, and that is our children, who we hope will soon arrive from college.

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: Yas, they are growing up around us to bless and comfort and all is required is the right understanding of all our duties and a sincere purpose to fulfill them.

Miss Hallie Q. Odey: And the spirit of universal friendship that is around and about us is not only a mere theory but is carried out in the practice of our daily lives.

Mrs. Frederick Douglas Odey: In the sense of the past years, much that will mark its character stands out in bold relief, and if we of this day are true to our race, the great brotherhood of man will be elevated.

Booker T. Poindexter: And we must always have it in

mind, wherever we turn our eyes or our thoughts. If we only are as honest and candid in our estimate of the provision made for us, as we are ordinarily in our estimate of the character and conduct of our fellow men, we would be struck with admiration and gratitude to that merciful Father who has seen our wants and provided for our comfort to an extent to which the care and provision of the best earthly parents for their children hardly gives the name of resemblance.

James Poindexter: That is true, and there is no truth better settled than that, and there was slavery until he whose right it is shall reign and the evil of such being thrown upon our race we had to bear; and now study how to relieve ourselves in every practical way.

Mr. Robert Caldwell: In looking back, the picture comes fresh to my mind, after the birth of our freedom, and our name as a private citizen was a better inheritance for ourselves and our children than any distinction we may attain, and the influence we could exercise for the country and to set a just value on our time.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: To set a just value on our time, will it deprive any one of any rational pleasure?

Mary Odey: You can see how it will be for those who strive to bring about reform. When those so utterly careless and indifferent about those of the highest moments.

Frederick Douglas Odey: Idleness adds nothing to the mind. It floats without finding anything. Please let him alone, there's no hope in sight for him. He will have to pay for his link in the chain of progress.

Roscoe Simmon Caldwell: We should not get discouraged —there will soon be a complete change of all things and a new order in every way, and 'peace on earth and good will to all men!'"

Booker T. Poindexter: And no honor that at this time loves

itself better than humanity is true honor. No law that stands between us and the highest laws of helping humanity to a higher standard is worth the paper it is written on.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: It will be most gratifying to our race when there will be universal brotherhood and a universal peace; but I don't believe in crying for peace, peace, when we know that peace cannot be established until Satan is dethroned.

James Poindexter: Yes, today universal power at work, friends of war let loose. Scripture fulfilling perplexity of nations. Israel to be gathered in the dark and cloudy days.

Miss Minnie Poindexter: I understand that Mr. Shaw's son Cormon was drafted and had to go to war. Just think this was his last year in college to complete his study to become a doctor.

Booker T. Poindexter: Well if our boys had to go to France, it was not death that beckoned them to go where that great event happened, where nations had risen up in perplexity, where human misery had increased. They improved every moment of their time and helped to allow Europe to repose in peace and Germany to be made to satisfy or give a good degree of content. And may God guide them back to their starting place and find a disposition to appreciate and to enjoy. (*Gets a letter from Virginia—reads it.*)

"Mrs. Frederick Douglas Odey.

"My Dear Beloved Parents:

"Your letter brought light to my path and joy to my heart when reading the news of the family reunion. I trust it will prove an increased attraction to all who will be present to unite in the joyful ingathering with such associations and connected as they will be—the most en-

deared recollections. We have all planned to arrive on that date.

“As ever,

“Virginia Odey.”

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: Coming home to the family reunion! I bet they will have some class to them. Some from Wilberforce and Tuskegee, State University. I must go out and sharpen up my wits so I can come across with that grammar. And I am going to discharge the whisk-broom, blacking brush, mop and broom. (*Starts for the door.*)

Miss Minnie Poindexter: I should think it would be agreeable to you to stay here and hear those distinguished characters. They may demonstrate the common saying that some objects appear larger by getting nearer to them, and you may learn more about the subjects of the day, which may have in them deeply impressive, improving, instructive and interesting associations going back to our early days.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: In our days in college it were a source of great gratification and we found in it so much satisfaction and in friendship. But, oh! the present universal friendship is only a mere theory and is carried out in the practice of our daily life. You take an instance—our college boys and girls—they think they are in a field to themselves and they all talk that high edifying, romantic, aloganic talk and some of them don't know enough that when Uncle Sam rains bullets on the Germans that they had to let them rain.

Roscoe Simmons Caldwell: You are one of our race that they are striking away that is worthless bound and trying to mire their virtue and intelligence which is the glory and the dignity and deserves more than the passing history. And I will just say to you, if our college boys and girls talk that high, edifying, romantic, aloganic talk you

are here with your perfidy, egotistical talk, with your rudely rudeness egotistical self.

Miss Hallie Q. Odey: I think he is alike the fellow that said he had eaten so many hog heads in winter that he was ashamed to look a hog in the face. And I think he is ashamed to look virtue and intelligence in the face to-night, which is the foundation of this country.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: I cannot help that, but I have been a little bit leary about virtue and intelligence since I looked that East St. Louis mob in the face.

Booker T. Poindexter. Ah, that mob in East St. Louis never had that kind of virtue and intelligence that half the world, both white and black, is fighting for. Not that kind of virtue and intelligence that ten thousand Negroes that belong to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who are acting as the aiming mind of one man to include the black man in every American right and privilege.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: You are so full of Jim-Crow-ism, patriotism, segregation, and democracy, that it is licking all the molasses off your bread and calling you a nigger.

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: Remember, the American Negro proves his value as a fighter in the war and Old Glory knows no color-line and those called to serve under that flag must understand the fact.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: Understand the fact for God's sake know what you was fighting for.

James Poindexter: We were fighting for the world to be made safe for democracy, and then we can have a dry world and the Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand unto God and segregation will be but a passing shadow.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson (calmly): Time for consideration. My next constant direction will be to keep

a particular watch over myself. And I feel a more strong desire to report upon this subject. I am speaking practically of those anxieties which I can feel and condemn myself for, in looking forward to the condition. I can see plainly before me the information of every character.

Miss Mary Odey (pleasantly and pointing towards the small children) : Those dear characters that we have served to make them what they are—those dear subjects that you have been so bold as to condemn everything that we introduced. And now it's time to use your endeavors to conquer your passion and evil propensities, to conform your life to the strict rules of Christianity which is the best practice of morality.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: Morality is strict justice between man and man. Therefore a man being moral does not imply he is a Christian.

Mr. Robert Caldwell: But being a Christian implies he is a moral man. Give this your best thought for it is a consideration of vast importance to you to go out and sharpen up your wits.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson (with much feeling) : I can see in every angle that prejudice will never allay against knowledge unless it is the utmost interest to every one and it will always be my aim so to conduct myself that those whom I value most in this world will soon approve my conduct when my actions will be laid bare to their inspection. (*Goes out.*)

Miss Hallie Q. Odey: I think he will join in with the race to help secure simple justice under the law. And will quickly know what is the real situation—the situation that is facing us on account of our dark skins in America.

(*College boys and girls come in with a happy mood and shake hands with all and make the old home ring with pleasure.*)

Miss Elizabeth Caldwell: Mother, I have set a just value on my time and I have made the right use of it, and never at any time deprive me of any pleasure but encourage temperance in the enjoyment of all the good things connecting us, which a good Providence has placed within our reach.

Paul Lawrence Odey: Father, I have striven to adopt such that it would be easy for me to go right than go wrong and you may well cherish it, it is the thing nearest my heart and I hold myself responsible to make good.

Miss Dorothea Poindexter: This family reunion is full of interest and the goodness of parents who seek by all means to bring us nearer to ourselves.

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: We are here in this life to gain knowledge and wisdom and to know what occupation to adopt or profession we should follow; and to rear our children so that they may add new honors to our names and to bless our declining years; and you that receive ten talents will receive a proportional reward, and those who receive one shall be punished tonight if they hides it under their napkin.

Miss Ethel Caldwell: We have nothing to hide under our napkin tonight, mother. How can we enjoy life better than by distributing the good things intrusted to us among those who are comforted by receiving them, so you need not feel yourselves any more much obliged than we are.

Mr. Robert Caldwell: The opportunity is at hand and you are brought very near to us on such a night as this by your progress as well as by your words.

Miss Ethel Caldwell: Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is for relations to dwell together in unity. We have obeyed their Father's injunction, not to fall out by the wayside. And the work of each day is performed with the feeling and the determination to work in the vineyard

while our time lasts. I am the happiest girl alive and willing to acknowledge this visit is so full of interest and it is a source of unfeigned thanksgiving that it has been permitted to us. And the subject of principal interest among us now is with such affections and source of happiness connecting from our early days, I hope that we will continue to feel it our duty to strive for that you have had so much at heart and have labored so long for, and that we may look back upon this visit with pleasure and forward to another with increased relish.

Mrs. Frederick Douglas Odey: Miss Hattie Odey, I hope that you cherish this engathering and hold yourself responsible in making good.

Miss Hatty Odey: My dear parents and relations, while I am in college, my heart yearns strongly towards Dayton, Ohio, which I consider the garden spot of America. And I shall not attempt to explain to you in words my pleasure to be here at our family reunion tonight, after so many years of effort as principal of school in the Southern lands.

And my experience has been my ablest teacher towards my expectations.

In the South is where one can trace the events of slavery, and what happened at that age has an influence on all after time, such as lynching and burning our race at the stake, which is in God's sight eating and uprooting the foundation of religion's liberty. And I pray that God, some day, that the vast millions of white people in this United States will commemorate their power to obtain reference to our virtue and intelligenec for a stronghold of liberty; and for that liberty with overflowing hearts you have gathered together your children about you on this great event which should be prized above all others and to your teachings are the blessings we enjoy—utters with a pointed significance the true intent of our meeting

here tonight and our words are the golden ones: "Honor thy father and thy mother." And without losing sight of the blessings attached to the command. We have gathered about you at this time not only to do you honor, but in some faint measure to express in words and actions the love we have for you. We rejoice that your lives have been spared to us so long; that time has dealt so gently with you; and that we can gather about you, children and grandchildren, in the old homestead while you are yet in the full enjoyment of health and all your faculties, almost an unbroken family.

Miss Mary Odey: Remember, Helen Poindexter, that in the best performance of all your duties lies the highest enjoyment of all our pleasures.

Helen Poindexter: Our present happiness was a great object for Booker T. Washington. As a friend he was most faithful, and many can testify to the value of his friendship as upon the warm sympathy and affection with which his heart was filled towards them and theirs. And many of the popular movements of more modern times were those alone by which he thought were prominent happiness and prosperity. As a citizen his views were comprehensive and bounded by no less than what concerned the honor and prosperity of the country, and keenly sensitive to the injury inflicted by such would tend to dis-promote our welfare. No parent could be more indulgent or more resolute in denying what was hurtful. As a Christian he endeavored to walk in the footsteps of his Master; and sought those fields of labor which all can meet with those which are hedged in by segregation, sect, and color, and his views did not limit him to the common obligation of morality, but included the highest sense of duty towards God and man.

James Poindexter: Miss Dorothea Poindexter, endeavor to do something to improve your visit, under circumstances so favorable; to do your part in establishing a character

for yourself and nothing to hide under your napkin.

Miss Dorotha Ponidexter: Many of our race can look back a few years, and recall to memory the manly form, and fine open countenance of Paul Lawrence Dunbar, who was so suddenly cut off at the very threshold of what promised to be a more honorable and useful career, which made him a stay and hope of our race. Those who were acquainted with him might suppose that his long-continued ill health, extending through a period of two years, permitted the formation of a character which few could attain. How he struggled in the business world in active life. The principles of religion and truth inculcated by a faithful mother upon the heart of the child, shown forth in all the events which mark the life of Paul Lawrence Dunbar. Let it rather be the aim of those who loved him and honored him in life to estimate his example now that he is dead.

Miss Hallie Q. Odey: Miss Elizabeth Caldwell, we have given you good books and words of good counsel and hope to observe the progress of your special improvements and for your safety who have so much at heart.

Miss Elizabeth Caldwell: It seems so fitted to include Frederick Douglas in our memories tonight. For more than thirty years he was so intimately associated in the excitement of the political struggle in which he was called to take a part; and he was never tempted to overstep the bond of courtesy or regard his opponents otherwise than with feeling of kindness. And for the advancements of all those good objects which tend to promote the welfare of the race. Having faithfully served in the cause of this country during the term of his engagement and took a deep interest in providing means for the education of the youth, and lived to see the subject in our care all that could reasonably hope to desire.

Dorotha Poindexter: Mr. Paul Lawrence Odey, poetical ideas are ardent in your heart and don't hide it under your

napkin but express something to recall the days of Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

Paul Lawrence Odey:

His praises now to sing,
Of a noble man to us so dear.
Up on the altar of duty his loyal brings
Charity and love to all is here.
But his great soul has flown,
Leaving a treasured memory that waves,
Whose strong voice with thunder tone
Proclaimed the liberation of slaves.

His character was so monumental
To sacrifice as he did for human
And what appeared to be eternal
Brought a vision for him to land.
The whirlwind spoke to him wisdom
That the same God's light lights all ways,
And when in silent would come visions
For the freedom of impressed slaves.

Lincoln always planted a rose,
That wreathed around a sadden brow,
And where a thistle always grows,
A glorious halo did allow.
And the great God of battles
Shield through the burning rays,
To the highest to unloosen the shackles
Of four million slaves.

Slavery has passed over the land,
Its tempest darken our sky;
Undaunted, however, we stand,
And shall until the time passes by.
We advocate liberty throughout,
Of that our hearts crave,

And for who made the flag wave out
For unhappy slaves.

Their souls were exposed to ruin
And their heads hung low to the breast;
But Christ silently was pursuing
Those were sighing for a season of rest.
God loves a contrite spirit,
And on the silent tomb's opening days
The pure in heart shall be of one merit
As Lincoln was for the slaves.

There was but one Abraham Lincoln,
His memory will be forever green;
Whose heart is an open book to thinking
Of the darkest hours this nation ever seen.
And has sealed with his saintly blood
A living example to our graves
Who was for charity, love, and stood
For over four million slaves.

Mr. Robert Caldwell: Miss Minnie Poindexter, you are not putting aside the title of original greatness that a good Providence has placed within your reach.

Miss Minnie Poindexter: My parents and kindred, I was laboring under the impression that I was to be numbered among those who are to be first-class listeners; and I offer it as my opinion that I haven't sufficient confidence in myself to make a speech, but I am enthusiasitic in my admiration of those who did not shun to declare that they are not hiding anything under their napkins tonight, and I was giving them my yearnest attention and passing over in excessive silence as I listened with an expression of my approval, to the faithful declarations of the speakers. And I know you all will hand them a bouquet of flowers and only allow me to feed on the odor of the blossoms as an expression of good will to the college boys and girls

who owe to this country their best behavior, services, and talents, and should devote them to its welfare, and may I be permitted to apply the character of my highly valued and respected relations. And now I am free to say with great pride, I am really glad to be here tonight at this family ingathering; and may God reward us and enable us to enjoy the elevated satisfaction that follows such good work.

Miss Hallie Q. Odey. That is wonderful. It's lovely, and worthy to rank with the finest masterpieces; and I am enthusiastic in my admiration of the speeches of the college boys and girls and of their splendid voices which have gives its utterance. And I hope the habit of mind that they have cultivated in college will be one that will bide with them and win for them a fair share of success. And further I am proud to say that we can see more plainly tonight than ever where we are to look forward for instructions, directions, and support, and there's a pleasant vision which opens to us when we look forward to the character that the college and schools are sending forth now and in the future.

Miss Mary Odey: It has been said tonight that who receives ten talents will receive a proportional reward and those who receive one shall be punished if they hides it under their napkin. I have nothing to hide tonight. I awoke this morning very early and after awhile fixed my mind in prayer to God that our duty may clearly be seen tonight and that we may perform it in the spirit of a true disciple. On this occasion our minds and feelings are elevated with devotion and as I trust suitably affected with gratitude to all who are present to unite in this joyful ingathering. God bless our old home tonight. And how important then that our places of education that are sustaining and supplying a pure and living stream that irrigates our homes and train our boys and girls to know their duty, what is needful proper and best.

Mrs. Frederick Douglas Odey. I wonder what is keeping Virginia?

Miss Hattie Odey. Mother, Virginia will be here soon. She met up with a gentleman by the name of R. B. V. Johnson and he told her that he was well acquainted with her folks at home and he seemed to be refined and well education.

Mr. James Poindexter. I wonder is that our Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson who has made his way to the people's respect and affections?

Mr. Frederick Douglas Odey: A good, kind word now and then makes the downhearted think more of their conduct and behavior.

Booker T. Poindexter. Don't you know that Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson graduated in Wilberforce in early days and he always said it was a magnificent college and was the next thing nearest his heart.

Mrs. Robert Caldwell: Remember that Robert said this morning that we would soon approve of his conduct when his actions would be laid bare to our inspection? And his reputation as a thinker and a writer has made whatever has been published of this sort desirable to be read by the great masses of our reading population. It's our Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson and I will bet a silver dollar that is with Virginia.

(Virginia Odey comes in with Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson. He stops at the door and talks with Booker T. Poindexter, who recognizes him. Virginia Odey shakes hands with all in a happy mood and they don't appear to thoroughly recognize Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson until Virginia Odey introduces him—then all rise and greet him.)

Helen Poindexter: Virginia, all of the college boys and girls have sung and made speeches. What are your future plans to keep the old home fires burning?

Virginia Odey: I hope when they were singing and speaking you could see the mental and moral qualities which can characterize them through life.

Mrs. rFrederick Douglas Odey: Virginia, every one here is interested in your welfare, and I read with deep interest your letter to them, and they said that you let no opportunity pass without making the most of it and that you are never worried, discouraged, or dull, but have a long-for friendship unknown.

Virginia Odey: My dear parents and relatives: With great pride I am proud to say that the general appearance of our family ingathering is of such a well-meaning event that it has brought back scenes of your childhood of fifty or more years ago. And my visit here tonight is so full of memories of the past that I hardly know where to begin—from your early days or the story of the present days. But I will say in conclusion that while I am in college my great object is to learn and secure the confidence of my teachers and friends. And I feel as though I can do a little to advance the cause of our happiness while I **remain here** at our family reunion in pleasure that flows from our plans and doings; that supplied a foretaste of the enjoyment for those happy hours in the pathway of our duty. And I hope the talents entrusted in our care have been faithfully employed tonight and show the sense of responsibility by active deeds more than by unmeaning words. And never to feel at liberty to waste on ourselves such things as by right principles. And when we turn back to the dark pages of our history it was that sense of duty that Lincoln had, long before society had been heard of, or the investigations had commenced on which our circumstances were based, that he, Lincoln, would free the slaves if he should ever become the President of the United States. And when he became President of the United States his sense of duty meant more to us than unmeaning words. And it was that practical instance of

that character, judgment, and decision of Lincoln that freed four million slaves. And this is the difference of going just right who had gone wrong. And this gentleman, as you will observe by his style, is well educated and the circumstances he states I have no doubt but what are true. He received an early education in Wilberforce and his parents and himself were once slaves and he says he has accepted an invitation to be one of the speakers on emancipation day. Will you allow me to present to you Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson, D.D., LL.D.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: Ladies and gentlemen: I was here this morning at the beginning of this family reunion and I was here forty years ago. I believe before the greatest majority of you were born, and I can say with great pride that I never was here under more pleasant circumstances than now. And some of you know that I have been neglectful and careless in the performance of those high every-day duties which I should never lose sight of for a moment, and try to be useful to those around me. And my down-hill tendency in the standard character was a bad sign. And my change I hope within your recollection of this day is such as almost to make you mistrust your own sense. Our duty is plain if we do not educate and elevate the class of people that is bringing everything down to their own level; they will change our system of government within a few years, and in our race we have many who are not educated—who are not making their way to the public respect.

And you know my anxiety about little things has kept me from the enjoyment of those bright scenes that was so common to me when not oppressed by any of those may be events, and I found myself in a shattered state, unfit to encounter the responsibilities incident to my station and now I am ashamed to express that weakness, but God grant that I may have the disposition to use my talent in such a manner as to receive at last the joyful sound

of "Well done."

Ray Caldwell: And now the ships of war have carried bread to our soldiers and powder and ball to inflict more injury upon the enemy and now this battle for liberty is won and our ships anchored in their harbor in time of peace. May the silent minority work steady forward with unflinching confidence in the probability of man through his God, will let the whole world know that our race does not harbor low, degrading evils. And may the Almighty in his infinite mercy teach candor, charity, and peace and we enjoy the sweet consciousness that this will be in harmony with the subject of life. As the closing of this family reunion, that is like the western horizon after sunset, bright and beautiful the opening of the new, radiant with life, hope and crown with such a custom of love; as few old grandfathers, grandmothers and uncles, aunts can muster in. And while your memory carries you back to the slavery days, and the birth of your freedom and the days of our childhood when you were the source and the inspiration of all our joys; when we played about your knees without a care or thought that went beyond the passing moments, blessed with health, a happy family, a united family. Thus our years went by until the swaddling bands of youth were thrown off, roundabouts and short dresses were abandoned and the children of yesterday became the man and woman of today.

(CURTAIN)

THIRD ACT

EMANCIPATION DAY

(*Grove scene. Roy Caldwell acting chairman. Prayer by Booker T. Poindexter.*)

Speakers of the Day:

Frederick Douglas Odey
Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson
Roscoc Simmons Caldwell
Booker T. Poindexter

Fellow Citizens: It is again our privilege with overflowing hearts to gather together to express that well-up within us, while memory carries us back to the intervening days of slavery, over fifty years ago, and we are honored to have with us today one who has been resolute in denying what would be hurtful to the race. I take pleasure in introducing Frederick Douglas Odey.

Frederick Douglas Odey: Ladies and gentlemen: The unbroken band of brothers who have marched together on this Emancipation Day hand in hand, united by a common bond of sympathy and affection, sustaining each other in all trials and rejoicing together to set a just value on time and to make the right use of it, to honor whom we should acknowledge and love. If we have misused or abused the opportunities there is not a moment to be lost in retracing our steps and making good by future efforts what has been lost by want of it. We can none of us ever know that a future will be allowed us to amend and correct our previous misdoings and omissions, and it is not less the part of wisdom than of duty to be always up and doing and do what little we may for the advancement of the race. And God grant us patience and submissive temper

to bear whatever may be put upon us with a full conviction that such will tend to our highest good, if we make the right use of it. Although at times clouds and darkness are around and about us; but we do certainly know by the words of inspiration that justice and judgment are the habitation of the throne; and goodness and mercy the attributes of his character.

And when we think back that it only takes a little over fifty years to complete the birth of our freedom, we should not be too much grieved that we have met the common fate of man. We have lived long enough to know that our work has been successful and comes down through a generation of fifty years from where they prayed to God to clear away in His good time all that were dark and vile for the race. And the little old log cabin in the lane was a congenial home where they had the deepest respect for religious feelings. And a romance can be written on the old banjo that was their favorite instrument to trip the light fantastic toe with a hearty good will to the many hours that they had spent in the cane and cotton fields, and at the hand loom, and the hum of the almost desolate spinning wheel comes across our memory on this Emancipation day like the remembrance of a pleasant but half-forgotten melody.

And today in addition to our advantageous arising from our honest course of conduct with our fellow men, I will say to the younger generation that theirs is the satisfaction reflecting within our race that you should endeavor to do your duty. It is, therefore, of the highest consequence that you should not only cultivate correct principles but that you should place your standard actions so high as to require great vigilance in living up to it. You are young and the course of life seems open, and pleasant prospects greet your ardent hopes, but you must remember that the race is not always to the swift, but with just reliance on the power you need have no fear of the threats of the wind and waves of the East St. Louis mob that

threatens our destruction.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have with us today one who has found time to take an interest in everything tending towards the amelioration and elevation of the race and takes this life's lessons to his heart and strives to carry out its teaching in his life and today we are proud to hear him speaking those words so full of meaning. With pleasure I introduce Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson, D.D., LL.D.

Robert Benjamin Valentine Johnson: Ladies and Gentlemen: It affords me great pleasure to be here with you and to think back where we come along—where we can see the good hand of God in all of our experiences, and it all goes to show that we all are engaged in the uplift of the race. How vain it would be of us this day—so ambitious of distinction—to view it on any other foundation than uprightness of character, pureness of life and an active performance of all those duties included to impress with the plain truth.

I cannot find any other words in which to express my thoughts than God be merciful to us as sinners, and let us continue on this way. There will be more than virtue enough in this race of ours to save us in this country. And we hope a better heart given some of its people and then the care and the anxiety of this world will not disturb but the social and sympathizing feeling will have its full share in the effect upon us and each of those in whom we trust, in their proper place and degree, will supply all our wants. And the cheering promises that encourage us when our powers are at the highest will not fail when the weight of years in infirmity has made it more necessary to our comfort to get over the few remaining span of the journey.

And the history of our race involves in so many details which we haven't time to give or count the links in the great chain of progress by the way which we have reached our present condition.

Fellow citizens, it is an honor to have with us a gentleman who is active and industrious, though passed the seventieth milestone on the journey of life, and his flood of recollection will bring a loving tribute to your grateful hearts, that involves the history of the race; that deserves more than passing history. I take this great opportunity to introduce Roscoe Simmons Caldwell.

Roscoe Simmons Caldwell: Ladies and Gentlemen: I can say with great pride that it affords me great pleasure to be here with you and to think and to say the simple fact that we are starting just right, and we are indebted with God's blessings on our labor, for our present position, as well as that of the numerous connections which have sprung up around us and today our duty is plain before us as the sun at noonday, by which events are connected together, and have led to the results that calls on us to bless the Lord for his benefits. And to us the opportunity thus permitted to us claim relationship with this world's goods on a more enlarged scale. And when we turn back we can trace the events of slavery and what happened at that age. It stands out today in bold relief that has an influence upon all after time and when we think back a little over fifty years. It was that of Lincoln's virtue, intelligence and investigations, judgment and decisions which characterized four millions of our fellow beings through life in God's good time who was sighing for a season of rest. And when the investigations were going on before Congress to abolish slavery and they finding that Lincoln's desire became more pressing for the approach of the hour for indulgence, but Congress resolved to discontinue the habit altogether, but it was Lincoln well fitted to be our President, in those troublesome times and lived to force the united, and his unhesitating decision which he considered the foundation of our success. From that age we have been connected for our good and the good of the country. And to say that we were placed in the war in a practically favorable situation and

provided with the genuine faith for improving ourselves in the knowledge of such will be hereafter useful to the race and the country. And our influence in this small measure will be felt through generations to come.

Still lives the memory of Lincoln—forever green on the pages of history. Submitted as a memorial of one whose life and character deserve more than the passing history. If, however, what Lincoln has done shall be the means of directing of those for which his record has been prepared to the consideration of his precepts, and above all his precepts shall be the means of influencing them for good, their future course of life—their efforts will not be in vain. And today we honor those who walk in his footsteps for the consideration of his precepts to make us fellow as a race, who ever since have been going up from the corner of dragons of slavery to our present position. I thank you. (*Prolonged cheering.*)

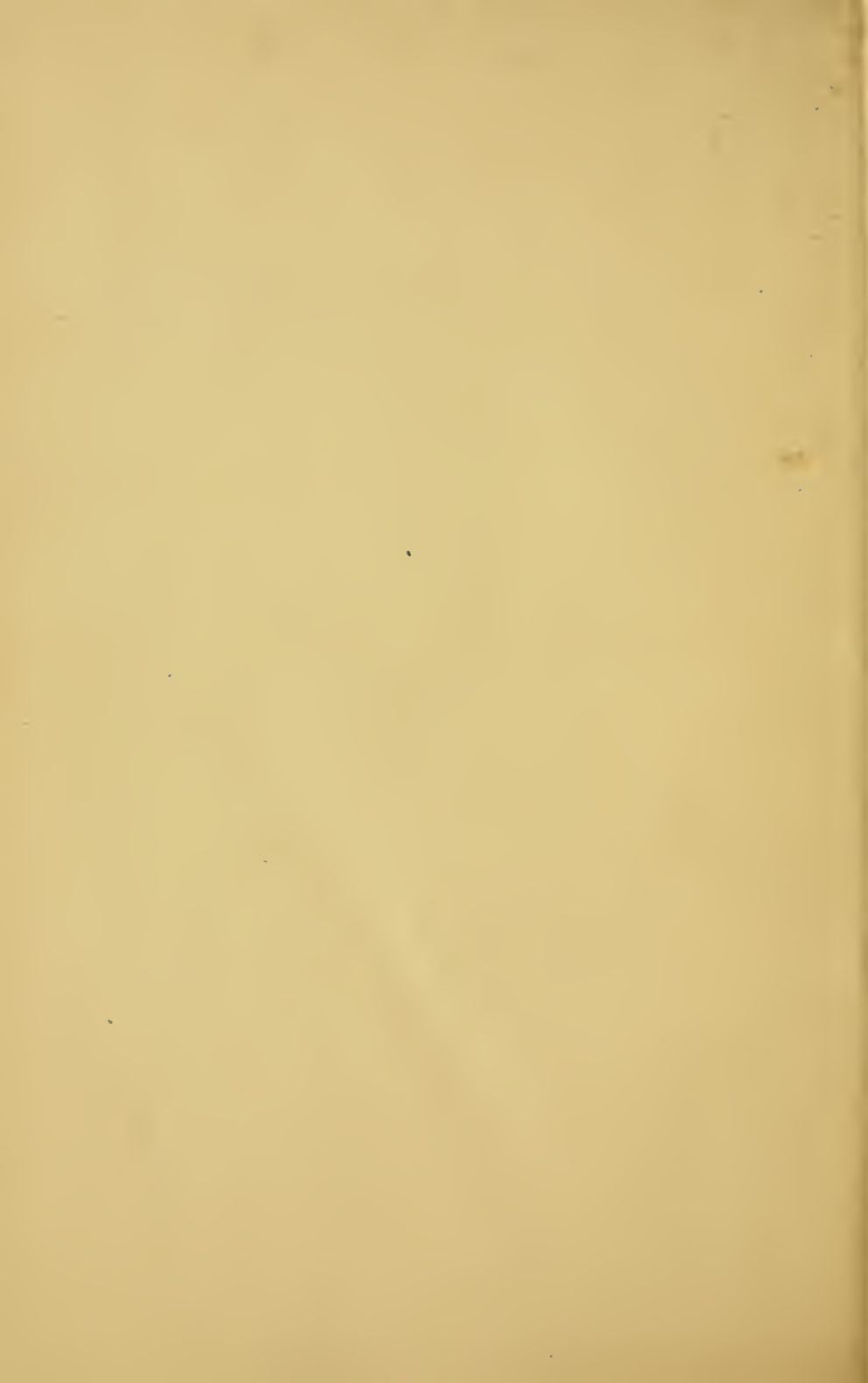
Ladies and gentlemen: We have with us this day to join us in our congratulations of this day, and we all know that no heart beats with more loyalty and unselfish affection, and that no one is more willing to contribute to the general rejoicing of the day, and who is trying to arouse by mercy and kindness in alleviating the inevitable results of war by smothering the fire of hatred and segregation and reconstructing from the old the beautiful spirit of the new United States. I take great pride in introducing Booker T. Poindexter.

Booker T. Poindexter: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, this is one great event that recalls the birth of our freedom; while memory carries us back through the intervening years of slavery and when circumstances threw our nation into the ungracious, unhallowed ones of destruction and human misery. The ruling millions lost no time in declaring that the "World must be made safe for democracy." And possibly many here know when the reconstruction growing out of the Civil War resulted in

adding the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments abolishing slavery and giving the Negro his freedom, is universally accepted uncontested. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which made the Negro a citizen and crowned him with the intended effort of these amendments, and since that time our race has been honored as mental superiority, as elevated station, as commanding influence, as glory, as highest political honor this country on him could bestow. And today that evil of segregation is growing in a fearfully rapid ratio, and it will require the steady course of respected and honest men of this United States to prevent its spread, by influencing the people of this land against our race becoming its slave, and our experiences are such as to confirm us that it would be true wisdom to have done so, and a practically exponent of Christian principles. And we as worthy citizens can only be made to see, when the people will know more about the new reconstruction through which we are now passing must complete the work of the old, so that in truth and in deed as well as in words and phrases: "There shall be no discrimination on account of race or color" and time for consideration so far as may be needed. And we trust they will find no backwardness on our part in putting matters straight, as we fought and died to save Europe for democracy with our eyes lifted to the hills, undaunted and unafraid, we will gladly go forth to save democracy to America. And my opinion of the future must deal with the earth, then the heavens, it will have less bearing upon theory, and more on actual life. Uncle Sam does not hesitate to call his colored sons to services, while many have paid the supreme sacrifice, and we bless God for sparing the lives of those that returned and humbly beseech Him to crown their labor with success in the future.

(CURTAIN)

6.8.77





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